



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tule Lake Unit,
World War II
Valor in the Pacific
National Monument

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Tule Lake Unit, WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pilgrimage Held at Tule Lake Site

TULELAKE, California— Nearly 400 people attended the 2012 Tule Lake Pilgrimage, held in Newell, Tulelake, and Klamath Falls from June 30 to July 3. Beginning in cities throughout the west coast, participants began their journey in buses that brought them to the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) campus for four days of learning, remembering and questioning the past which brought 20,000 Japanese-Americans to the Tule Lake Segregation Center in Newell, CA from 1942-1946.

Sunday, July 1 included a visit to the Segregation Center site, now partially protected by the National Park Service as part of the Tule Lake Unit of World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. Pilgrimage participants, who included interested parties, relatives of former prisoners, and former prisoners themselves, walked through the original jail which held hundreds of men without due process during the period the Center was open. Stories of significant events and day to day life poured from former prisoners now in their golden years.

At the memorial service, held on the site of the former Tule Lake cemetery, Reverend Jay Shinseki led the pilgrims in a prayer for remembrance and the healing of wounds of the wartime incarceration. “True healing occurs by embracing the truth of what occurred here and by reliving and sharing with one another and continuing to fight for justice. We must not forget the sacrifices and struggles that occurred here,” said Reverend Shinseki.

On Monday, July 2 participants heard stories of life in the prisons as told by people who were young adults during the period of incarceration in the ten War Relocation Centers. There was also time for reflection and healing in Intergenerational Discussion Groups. These groups, and the Pilgrimage in general, help members of the Japanese-American community work through the group trauma brought on by this dark period in US history.

“The Pilgrimage allows people who have strong connections to the Tule Lake story an opportunity to reflect on its history, discuss its enduring effects, and attempt to reach accord on its meaning,” said Mike Reynolds, Superintendent of Lava Beds National Monument, which administers the Tule Lake site. “The location of the former segregation center, in Newell, has great symbolic and emotional value for the pilgrims and all groups interested in the significance of the site.”

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Tule Lake Segregation Center was one of ten War Relocation Centers opened by the US Government after Executive Order 9066 was signed by Franklin D Roosevelt in 1942. EO 9066 allowed for the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry, regardless of citizenship, from their west coast homes. After a confusing and unfair questionnaire was ordered in 1943, all those deemed “disloyal” were sent to Tule Lake, which was converted to a maximum security segregation center wracked with tension and unrest. Many were segregated at Tule Lake due to their attempt at peaceful protest against their rights being taken away. Some were compelled to renounce their citizenship in order to keep families together or to further protest their treatment as US citizens.

The bi-annual Tule Lake Pilgrimage is organized by the Tule Lake Committee as a, “time to gather and reflect on the history and experience of our forebears and to honor those who were imprisoned at the Tule Lake concentration camp. Pilgrims are not ‘observers,’ but participants, seeking to learn from one another and find our commonalities,” according to the Tule Lake Committee website.

The Tule Lake Unit of World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument was established in 2008. This year is the first where some funding has been available from the National Park Service and, in partnership with the non-profit Tule Lake Committee, preservation efforts on the jail, carpenter shop and various buildings at Camp Tulelake have begun. You can visit the temporary visitor center at the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fairgrounds in Tulelake, CA to learn more. It is open every day, from 8am to 5pm. Tours of the jail and Camp Tulelake are also available.

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For more information about visiting the Tule Lake Unit of World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, call 530-260-0537, email tule_interpretation@nps.gov, or go to www.nps.gov/tule.

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